

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 21 September 2017 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chair), D. Cargill, Harris, R. Hignett, S. Hill, Jones, T. McInerney, Nelson and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Wharton

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Scott, D. Parr, M. Vasic, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner, E. O'Meara and M. Allen

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB34 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2017 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

EXB35 PROCUREMENT OF HALTON HEALTHWATCH AND ADVOCACY HUB SERVICE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Services, on the procurement of Halton Healthwatch and Halton Advisory Hub.

The Board was advised that, currently, Halton had contracts with four agencies for the delivery of a number of statutory functions with regards to Healthwatch and advocacy. It was reported that all of these contracts were due to expire in March 2018. Work had been undertaken with neighbouring authorities to identify opportunities for a collaborative approach to the re-procurement and delivery of these functions.

Members noted that it was the intention to combine Healthwatch and the advocacy service into one contract,

and the report outlined the benefits of such an approach. It was expected that commissioning these services in this way would reduce the overall cost to the local authority.

Reason(s) For Decision

As the value of the proposed contract would exceed the EU threshold for services of this type, Executive Board approval was sought.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

An option to commission Healthwatch across a wider geographical footprint was considered (see paragraph 3.3).

Implementation Date

1 April 2018.

RESOLVED: That the commissioning of Halton Healthwatch and Halton Advocacy Hub through an open tender process, be approved.

Director of Adult
Social Services

EXB36 AFFORDABLE WARMTH - PUBLICATION OF
STATEMENT OF INTENT TO UTILISE ENERGY
COMPANY OBLIGATION FLEXIBILITY CRITERIA
(ECO2FLEX)

The Board considered a report of the Director of Public Health, on Affordable Warmth.

The Board was advised that ECO2Flex was part of the Government licence requirements for those companies that supplied gas and electricity to the public. It was reported that it was an optional extension of the existing ECO scheme to help reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty through energy efficiency measures.

It was noted that following consultation, the Government had determined that local authorities would be able to define eligible homes under the new flexible eligibility mechanism. This eligibility would target two main categories of private tenure households which may otherwise be excluded under Affordable Warmth. To ensure accountability, the Government would require the authority to publish a Statement of Intent (SoI), amongst other requirements, as set out in the report. Therefore, Halton would need to publish a SoI before funds could be allocated, and develop a partnership with an energy company or one of their agents.

The Board was advised that the Liverpool City Region (LCR) authorities had produced an LCR-wide scheme and Sol to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery and benefits of the scheme.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Joint Statement of Intent is approved;
- 2) Halton participates in a Combined Authority or similar City Region or devolution process to access the flexibility component of the Energy Obligation Scheme; and
- 3) authority to deliver the flexible component of ECO 2 is delegated to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Environmental Services.

Director of Public Health

TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO

EXB37 PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF BUS SHELTERS AT BUS STOPS LOCATED ON CLIFTON ROAD WITH THE JUNCTION OF MALPAS ROAD

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the proposed installation of bus stops on Clifton Road, Runcorn.

The Board was advised that a request for the installation of a bus shelter had been received in May 2016. A period of consultation undertaken with residential properties resulted in two residents in support and two against. Following this, a further period of consultation was undertaken in respect of an additional bus stop across the road (as identified in Appendix 1). The report detailed the outcome of this further consultation.

It was noted that the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board had considered and supported the proposals, at its meeting held on 28 June 2017. However, since that meeting, the Council had received a complaint from those that objected to the initial installation, and as two of the complainants were Members of the Council, it was felt that the matter should be presented to the Executive Board for their further consideration.

RESOLVED: That the installation of bus shelters on Clifton Road, Runcorn, as identified in Appendix 1, be approved.

Strategic Director
Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB38 STREET LIGHTING HIGHWAY ELECTRICAL TERM MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which sought approval to extend the current term maintenance contract for Street Lighting.

The Board was advised that the current contractor, Tarmac, commenced a term maintenance contract in November 2010 to maintain all highway electrical equipment within the Borough. Members were advised that extending the contract represented value for money and would save the Council the cost of re-tendering the work.

It was reported that normal expenditure covered by this contract had been around £0.5m each year. However, capital funding had been secured through this contract for the installation of LED lanterns, which would increase the work carried out through this contract. Therefore, the Board was advised that expenditure was anticipated to exceed £1.0m for the next extension period. In the longer term, with the installation of LED lanterns, street lighting maintenance costs would reduce.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the extension of the Street Lighting Term Maintenance Contract under Procurement Standing Order 1.15 for a period of one year from 1 November 2017 to 31 October 2018 be agreed; and
- 2) it be recorded that the expenditure is anticipated to be in excess of £1.0m per annum.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB39 HALTON RESIDENTS' FUNERAL - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the proposal to set up a Halton Residents' Funeral package.

The Board was advised that the average cost of a funeral had almost doubled since 2005, with costs expected

to continue to rise in future years. Following the death of a loved one, families had to make decisions about funeral arrangements and to make choices which increasingly plunged them into serious and long term debt.

The report set out details of a proposed Halton Residents' funeral package to provide a reasonably priced dignified funeral service, which would be indistinguishable from any other funeral service. The report set out in more detail what a fixed price Residents' Funeral package would include.

Reason(s) for Decision

To help to alleviate funeral poverty within the Borough.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The Council could simply do nothing and leave the delivery of this type of service to the market. If that option was taken, prices for funerals would continue to rise, putting more residents into debt.

Implementation Date

January 2018.

RESOLVED: That the setting up of a Halton Residents' Funeral offer, as set out in Section 4 of the report, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB40 2017/18 QUARTER 1 SPENDING

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which summarised the overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 June 2017.

In overall terms, revenue expenditure was £0.808m above the budget profile. It was reported that based on current spend patterns, projections showed that the Council would have a year-end outturn overspend position ranging between £3m and £3.5m, if no corrective action were taken. The main budget pressure facing the Council continued to be within the Children and Families Department, in particular out of borough residential placements and fostering.

The Capital Programme had been revised to reflect the number of changes in spending profiles and funding as

schemes had developed; a list of those schemes that had been revised were set out in the report. Capital spending at 30 June 2017 totalled £39.4m which was 99% of planned spending at this stage. This represented 33.8% of the total Capital Programme of £116.4m.

The Council's balance sheet was monitored regularly in accordance with the Reserves and Balances Strategy which formed part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The key reserves and balances had been reviewed and were considered prudent and appropriate at this stage in the financial year and within the current financial climate.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to the absolutely essential;
- 2) Strategic Directors take appropriate action to contain overall spending within their total operational budget by year-end; and
- 3) Council be asked to approve the revised Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 3, attached to the report.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB41 COUNCIL TAX SECTION 13A DISCOUNT POLICY STATEMENT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on a proposed amendment to the Council Tax Section 13A Discount Policy Statement.

The Board was advised that a recent Children's Society campaign called upon local authorities to do more to support families struggling with council tax debt, particularly care leavers. At its meeting on 5 September 2017, the Corporate Policy and Performance Board considered a report on the matter, recommending changes to the Council Tax Section 13A Discount Policy, so that care leavers were exempt from paying council tax until they reached their 25th birthday.

It was reported that, under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council had a general discretionary power to reduce the liability for council tax in relation to individual cases or classes of case that it may determine, where national discounts and exemptions could not be applied. It was proposed that Care Leavers relief

would be available from the start of the 2018/19 financial year, with an estimated cost of £6,000 per annum.

RESOLVED: That the amendment to the Council Tax Section 13A Discount Policy Statement, to reduce to nil the amount of council tax payable by young people leaving care from the age of 18 to 25, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB42 LOCAL DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATE RELIEF SCHEME

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which sought approval to establish a Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme.

The Board was advised that, on 8 March 2017, the Chancellor announced that the Government would make available a discretionary fund of £300m nationally, to support those businesses which faced the steepest increase in business rates. It was reported that, following revaluation, those businesses facing an increase were already being supported through transitional arrangements. Additional help was also in place to support those businesses that had lost some or all of their small business rate relief and to public houses.

It was noted that, although the General Election had delayed the detailed implementation of the announcement, the necessary guidance and funding was now in place which enabled Councils to establish and implement their schemes. Section 31 grant funding would be administered through billing authorities' existing legal powers. It was reported that Halton had been allocated £285,000 over four years, to be spent as set out in the report.

Appendix 1 set out the proposed Local Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme, detailing eligibility criteria to be applied and the application process. There was a requirement for the Council to consult with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on the design of the Local Scheme.

It was further reported that the Government had also announced a scheme of business rates relief for public houses, which would be fully funded under Section 31 grant funding, as well as a further scheme known as Support to Small Business Relief, which was intended to help those ratepayers that would lose some or all of their Small Business Rates Relief following revaluation.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Local Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme set out in the report and appendix, be approved, subject to consultation with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority;
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Operational Director, Finance, in liaison with the Resources Portfolio holder, to finalise and implement the Scheme following appropriate consultation;
- 3) the scheme of business rates relief for public houses outlined in the report, be approved; and
- 4) the scheme of business rates relief support for small businesses outlined in the report, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB43 DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on an application for discretionary non-domestic rate relief.

The Board was advised that, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business rate payer. Since 1 April 2017, the Council had been responsible for meeting the full cost of all mandatory and discretionary rate relief granted, as part of the Liverpool City Region 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot Scheme.

The report detailed an application from Bamboo Bear Childcare Limited, which operated from premises in Runcorn, providing childcare facilities for children aged 0-5 years old. It was reported that the organisation was not a registered charity and therefore was not eligible to receive mandatory rate relief. The request was for 100% discretionary rate relief for 2017/18, backdated to 1 November 2016. It was noted that the organisation had submitted an appeal to the Valuation Office Agency for a further reduction in the property's rateable value with the outcome of this request awaited.

The Board was reminded that the Council did not currently provide discretionary rate relief to any other private

childcare providers within the Borough. It was also noted that the organisation was already well established within the Borough, with ambitious development plans and there was no indication that these plans would be influenced by the award of rate relief.

RESOLVED: That the request for 100% discretionary rate relief from Bamboo Bear Childcare Limited for the period from 1 November 2016 to 31 March 2018, be refused on the grounds set out in paragraph 3.8 of the report.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB44 MURDISHAW REGENERATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on an amendment to the Capital Programme to allow for funding for the improvement of the Murdishaw area of Runcorn.

The Board was advised that, since the closure and subsequent demolition of the former Jolly Brewer Public House, the Council had been working closely with local partners to reinvigorate Murdishaw local centre. It was noted that the Council had sold the former Jolly Brewer site to Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT), who had agreed to deliver 18 new homes and a new re-located car park to the front of the local centre retail units. The car park element would be completed by November 2017.

It was reported that in October 2016, Mott Macdonald were appointed as an independent consultant to drive forward the visioning process for the wider regeneration of the Murdishaw area. Two pieces of work had been completed – the Visioning Framework and a housing market analysis - and in conjunction with this, it was proposed that a series of small scale projects be delivered which targeted areas of most need. A Steering Group would oversee the development of the options, and lead on resident engagement as proposals emerged.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to amend the Capital Programme to include £46,000 for the Murdishaw Estate Regeneration Programme to provide the Council's contribution to the actions and activities outlined in the report, to be funded from the Capital Receipt received for the Jolly Brewer Pub.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB45 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) Whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) Whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB46 ACQUISITION OF BROSELEY HOUSE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the acquisition of Broseley House, Widnes.

The Board was advised that there was an opportunity to acquire the freehold and leasehold interests in the property. Details of the financial implications were set out in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the acquisition of the Freehold interest in Broseley House for the sum referred to in the report, be approved;
- 2) the acquisition of the Long Leasehold interest in Broseley House for the sum referred to in the report, be approved;
- 3) an allocation of a sum referred to in the report for demolition costs be approved; and
- 4) Council be recommended to approve a variation to the Capital Programme as referred to in the report, to cover the costs outlined in section 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 of the report.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

(N.B. Councillor Hignett declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following item of business as one of the parcels of land referred to in the report, was located close to his own property. He left the room during consideration of the item and took no part in the discussion)

EXB47 STARTER HOMES AND ACCELERATED CONSTRUCTION OPPORTUNITY - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the development of a detailed project to identify suitable sites for Starter Homes.

The Board was advised that, as part of the Housing White Paper, the Government was consulting on widening the definition of 'affordable housing', to include Starter Homes. In February 2017, the Homes and Communities Agency invited local authorities to submit Expressions of Interest for their Accelerated Construction Programme (AC). It was reported that AC was the Government's new approach to land disposal which increased overall delivery in the sector, at a faster rate than the housing market.

Since the publication of the agenda, and following consultation with the respective Ward Councillors, one of the sites had been removed from the list for proposed development. A revised report was circulated. The remaining sites had a strategic fit with the Healthy New Town's Project, had been identified as suitable for potential development and fitted well within the current HBC

development strategy for housing growth, regeneration of brownfield sites and generation of new homes bonus.

Reason(s) For Decision

To accelerate housing development in the Borough and to establish a good working relationship with the Homes and Communities Agency to promote future joint working.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The other options were:

- a) Do nothing. However, this would not lead to any additional housing units being created.
- b) The Council to invest resources in bringing these sites forward. The Council did not have available resources to invest in this type of activity.
- c) Seek alternative funding sources. There were no other resources available.

Implementation Date

1 October 2017.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the proposal to ascertain the feasibility of developing the proposed sites, as outlined in the report, be supported;
- 2) the sites identified at paragraph 4.3 are declared surplus assets;
- 3) the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be authorised to take all appropriate steps to develop these proposals; and
- 4) Members agree that a report will be presented to the Executive Board for final decision, once the outcome of the feasibility work and consultation with relevant stakeholders, including further consultation with Ward Councillors, is available.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB48 RUNCORN VISION AND REGENERATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the progress on the regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre.

The Board was advised that Runcorn Town Centre was one of eight key impact areas within the Council's Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plus Plan, which was approved by the Board on 16 March 2017. The document, circulated at the meeting, set out the Council's aspirations for the regeneration of Runcorn, the details of which were provided in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the attached Vision Document for Runcorn be approved;
- 2) the continuation of discussions between Langtree and the Council to progress the development of a Master Plan for Runcorn Station Quarter be agreed;
- 3) a future update on these discussions will be provided; and
- 4) Members note the next steps and actions outlined in Section 3 of the report.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB49 EGERTON STREET DEVELOPMENT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which updated Members on the progress on the agreement with Bryan Developments to develop a site at Egerton Street, Runcorn.

This proposal was previously reported to the Board in June 2017, where the item was deferred so that further options for the site could be investigated. Details of the current offer from the developer were set out in the report for Members' information.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Members noted the action taken by the Chief Executive under his delegated powers, and in consultation with the Leader, to progress the Egerton Street Development in Runcorn; and
- 2) the Board notes the authority given to the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the satisfaction

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services, on the basis of the revised terms received.

MINUTES ISSUED: Tuesday 26 September 2017

CALL-IN: 3 October 2017

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on Tuesday 3 October 2017

Meeting ended at 2.15 p.m.